

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, IT, VT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN POLITICS: THE CHURCH MORE MILITANT

1. THE 13TH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE (CEI) ENDED ITS WEEK-LONG DELIBERATIONS (SEPTEL TO FOLLOW) MAY 21 WITH A POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT ADDRESS BY POPE PAUL WHICH ENDORSED CHURCH'S RE-ENGAGEMENT IN ITALIAN POLITICS.

2. THE ASSEMBLY WAS OPENED MAY 17 WITH A SPEECH BY CARDINAL POMA IN WHICH HE: UNEQUIVOCALLY UNDERLINED IRRECONCILABILITY OF MARXISM AND CHRISTIANITY; DENOUNCED CATHOLICS WHO HAD ACCEPTED TO RUN FOR PARLIAMENT ON COMMUNIST (PCI) TICKET; AND THREATENED THEM BY STATING THAT ECCLESIASTICAL LAW FORBIDDING SUCH ENGAGEMENTS WAS STILL VALID.

3. ALTHOUGH CARDINAL POMA MADE HIS OPENING REMARKS AFTER A "SYMBOLIC" PRIVATE AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE, IN THE ENSUING DEBATE THERE WAS SOME DISSENT AMONG THE 300 BISHOPS OF THE ASSEMBLY--REPORTEDLY AT THE LACK OF PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH BISHOPS. THUS, POPE PAUL'S ADDRESS MAY 21 WAS SIGNIFICANT FOR IT DIRECT ENDORSEMENT OF THE POMA LINE.

4. POPE PAUL, REFERRING TO PRESENT "SOCIO-POLITICAL MOMENT (E.G. TO THE CURRENT POLITICAL CAMPAIGN), SAID THAT:
-- CHURCH PATRIMONY CANNOT BE SUBJECT TO CAMOUFLAGE OR COMPROMISE AND IT CANNOT BE JOINED TO POINTS OF VIEW "TOTALLY
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AND INTRINSICALLY OPPOSED TO ITS NATURE";

--IT DOES NOT CONFORM TO CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO "ADHERE, ESPECIALLY PUBLICLY, TO POLITICAL EXPRESSIONS WHICH ARE, FOR IDEOLOGICAL MOTIVES OR BY HISTORIC EXPERIENCE, RADICALLY OPPOSED TO OUR RELIGIOUS CONCEPTION OF LIFE."

5. COMMENT: POPE PAUL'S ADDRESS TO ITALIAN BISHOPS, EVEN WITHOUT EXPLICITLY CITING THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND MOVEMENTS TO WHICH CATHOLICS CANNOT ADHERE, REPRESENTS A DEFINITE DEPARTURE FROM THE POST-CONCILIAR LINE OF THE CHURCH'S DISENGAGEMENT FROM ITALIAN POLITICS. THIS IS JUSTIFIED, ACCORDING TO THE POPE'S OWN STATEMENT, BECAUSE "SUPREME INTERESTS" ARE AT STAKE IN THE CURRENT "SOCIO-POLITICAL MOMENT". SEPTTEL WILL ANALYZE POLITICAL REACTIONS TO THE NEW STATEMENTS BY THE POPE AND THE BISHOPS AND WILL ASSESS THEIR POSSIBLE ELECTORAL EFFECTS. VOLPE

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